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NINETEENTH PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN LIBERIA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of Security Council resolution 1071 (1996) of 30 August 1996, by which the Council requested me to submit a report by 15 October 1996 with proposals for assistance which the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) or other United Nations agencies could provide in support of the peace process in Liberia. Under that resolution, the Council also requested me to report on the situation of child soldiers in Liberia, and to provide an update on the status of property stolen from UNOMIL, the United Nations and international agencies during hostilities in Monrovia earlier this year.

2. The present report includes these elements, as well as an update on developments in Liberia since my report of 22 August 1996 (S/1996/684).

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS

3. It will be recalled that, during the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) summit of the Committee of Nine on Liberia held at Abuja on 17 August 1996, ECOWAS, the faction leaders and Liberian civilian groups took a number of decisions necessary to put the peace process back on track. These decisions included, inter alia, the appointment of a new Chairperson of the Council of State and a new timetable for the implementation of the 1995 Abuja Agreement, starting with the restoration of the ceasefire by 31 August 1996 and culminating in the holding of elections by 30 May 1997.

4. Since that time, some progress has been made towards the implementation of the decisions taken in Abuja. On 3 September 1996, the new Chairperson of the Council of State, Ms. Ruth Perry, was inducted into office and thus became the first woman Head of State in Africa. On 10 September, the Council of State met for the first time since the outbreak of hostilities on 6 April.

5. Tensions that had arisen between Roosevelt Johnson, the leader of a wing of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-J), and the Chairperson of the Council of State have now subsided with the formal acceptance by the Council of Mr. Johnson's full list of government appointees. However, differences of opinion persist within ULIMO-J, some members of which feel that these appointments do not represent the interests of all elements in the faction.

6. At the first meeting of the Council of State and the new Cabinet on 30 September 1996, a decision was taken to establish a number of committees to assist in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, including in regard to elections and the restructuring of the joint security, police and other paramilitary structures. A committee of all the signatories to the Agreement was also established to monitor implementation of the peace process.

7. The new Chairperson of the Council of State met with the Chairman of ECOWAS, General Sani Abacha, the Head of State of Nigeria, in Abuja from 24 to 26 September, to review the status of implementation of the peace process. ECOWAS has indicated that such consultations will continue on a regular basis.

8. While efforts have been made to establish a cohesive Council of State and the Chairperson has shown determination to provide the Council with effective and neutral leadership, the faction leaders on the Council remain deeply mistrustful of one another and continue to engage in hostilities in the interior of the country. This raises a concern as to the ability of the Council to carry out its functions effectively, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Abuja Agreement.

9. General Abacha wrote to me on 15 September 1996 to inform me of decisions taken at the ECOWAS summit held at Abuja in August (see para. 3). He noted that the Abuja Agreement had been extended, that a revised implementation schedule had been agreed and that elections were now scheduled to be held in Liberia before the end of May 1997. In furtherance of the latter objective, he anticipated that "the United Nations would be requested to work with ECOWAS to provide necessary assistance and support in the processes leading to the conduct of free and fair elections in Liberia".

10. To date, no formal request for United Nations assistance in the holding of elections has been received. ECOWAS and the Council of State are continuing their consultations on the precise nature of the assistance that is to be sought from the international community for the electoral process. In addition, key issues pertaining to the holding of free and fair elections in Liberia have yet to be decided, including the process to be used for selecting a neutral and independent Electoral Commission; the status of the Constitution and of the electoral law; whether the elections would be full-term elections or only transitional elections; and the scope and extent of the polling.

11. The Chairperson of the Council of State, Ms. Perry, visited United Nations Headquarters on 9 October 1996 to address the General Assembly. During a meeting with me, she appealed to the United Nations and the international community for assistance in advancing the peace process in Liberia, and particularly for support with respect to disarmament, demobilization,

reintegration and the holding of elections. She did not, however, give precise indications of the role the United Nations would be asked to play with regard to the elections.

12. The first assessment meeting of ECOWAS, UNOMIL, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) and representatives of the donor community began in Monrovia on 16 October to review the status of implementation of the Abuja Agreement, with the Special Envoy of the Chairman of ECOWAS, Chief Tom Ikimi, Foreign Minister of Nigeria, as chairman of the meeting. This is to be followed by a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia, scheduled to take place at Monrovia, from 4 to 8 November.

III. MILITARY ASPECTS

Status of the ceasefire and disengagement of forces

13. Six weeks have passed since 31 August when, in accordance with the new timetable for the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, the factions were to have implemented the ceasefire and disengaged their forces. While all factions, except the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), have issued orders to their commanders to cease hostilities and some steps have been taken towards the disengagement of forces, fighting continues in the south-east and the west.

14. The ceasefire in Monrovia continues to hold and ECOMOG remains fully deployed in the city in order to maintain security. While civilians are not seen carrying arms, and ECOMOG has confiscated a considerable number of arms and ammunition through its cordon and search operations, it is believed that significant stockpiles of arms and ammunition still exist in the city. In order to enhance security in Monrovia, the curfew is being more rigorously enforced by ECOMOG.

15. During the reporting period, UNOMIL and ECOMOG undertook patrols to a number of previously inaccessible areas in order to verify the ceasefire and disengagement of forces. Following an agreement concluded on 6 September 1996 between the two wings of ULIMO, ULIMO-J and General Alhaji Kromah's wing (ULIMO-K), between the two wings of ULIMO, hostilities between them ceased in Bomi County and the two wings disengaged their forces. ULIMO-J has recently, however, re-established some of its checkpoints in the area and increased the presence of its fighters in Tubmanburg. Furthermore, hostilities between the two wings of ULIMO in Grand Cape Mount county have intensified in recent days, especially around Sinje, Wengokor, Gbesse and Tienne (see map). Each faction has taken the position that any hostile action by it has been in defence against attacks by the other.

16. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) has dismantled its checkpoints along the highways in Bong and Nimba counties, although it still maintains checkpoints in Bong Mines, which was a contested area earlier this year. NPFL has also removed its checkpoints in the Buchanan area. However, despite efforts on the part of UNOMIL and ECOMOG, little headway has been made in defusing hostilities between NPFL and LPC in the south-east. Moreover, lack

of cooperation from NPFL and LPC has made it difficult for UNOMIL and ECOMOG to visit most other areas of the south-east to verify the status of the ceasefire. In this connection, on 17 September, a joint mission of the Ceasefire Violations Committee and the Disarmament Committee, which included representatives of UNOMIL, ECOMOG and the factions, was harassed during a visit to the LPC stronghold of Zwedru. The NPFL representatives were arrested by the local LPC commander and were severely manhandled, as were some other members of the mission, who were also robbed. UNOMIL and ECOMOG issued a strong protest to LPC and returned to the area the following day with the LPC leader, George Boley, to secure the release of the two NPFL representatives.

17. On 10 October 1996, the LPC leader reported to UNOMIL that the NPFL forces had overrun the city of Greenville. He also stated that NPFL had, over the past several months, taken from the LPC areas which he had planned to use for the disarmament and demobilization of his fighters and that, unless NPFL withdrew from those areas, LPC would find it difficult to disarm. NPFL maintained, however, that Greenville had been under its control for some time. In view of the seriousness of these allegations and their potential implications for the peace process, a joint investigation and verification mission of the Ceasefire Violations Committee and the Disarmament Committee visited Greenville on 12 October to investigate the incident. Preliminary findings indicate that NPFL may have taken control of Greenville in September 1996, after the ceasefire had been re-established. However, the Ceasefire Violations Committee is still finalizing its report on the matter.

18. While, in accordance with the new timetable for the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, the process of disarmament and demobilization is not scheduled to commence until 22 November 1996, some factions have indicated a willingness to start disarming some of their fighters before that date. In this connection, ULIMO-K handed over some arms and ammunition, including a surface-to-air missile and 119 anti-tank mines, to ECOMOG on 7 September in Voinjama. ULIMO-K has also announced its intention to carry out a similar exercise in Grand Cape Mount County. In addition, NPFL has encamped some 500 fighters in Nimba County in preparation for early disarmament but has not clarified how it intends to proceed with this.

Deployment of ECOMOG and UNOMIL

19. The current force strength of ECOMOG is estimated at some 7,500 all ranks and is deployed in Monrovia, Kakata and Buchanan and the Po River area. The Force Commander is continuing his efforts to reinvigorate ECOMOG and has demonstrated his determination to ensure that the force carries out its tasks effectively.

20. During the reporting period, 84 trucks provided by the Government of the Netherlands and 35 trucks provided by the Government of Germany arrived in Monrovia for ECOMOG. The Government of the United States of America continues to provide logistic and communications equipment to ECOMOG, on the basis of the $30 million pledge of assistance it made in April 1996.

21. UNOMIL's current military strength consists of 10 military observers who perform the following duties in pursuance of their mandate: patrolling in

Monrovia, Kakata, Buchanan, Suehn, Tubmanburg, Gbarnga, and Grand Cape Mount County to monitor the status of the ceasefire and disengagement of forces; joint investigations with ECOMOG of ceasefire violations; verification of arms and ammunition secured through ECOMOG's cordon and search operation and voluntary disarmament; and liaison and planning with ECOMOG (see annex). As indicated in my last report (S/1996/684), in light of the decisions taken at the ECOWAS Summit on 17 August, it was my intention to deploy an additional 24 military observers to Liberia. The deployment of these observers was initially delayed because of continuing doubts on the part of the international community about the prospects for progress in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, but it is now expected that some of them will arrive in Liberia during the latter part of October. Once a sufficient number have been deployed, UNOMIL will re-establish team sites in two areas outside Monrovia where ECOMOG is presently deployed, namely Buchanan and Kakata.

Revised concept of operations

22. In paragraph 5 of resolution 1071 (1996), the Security Council requested me to submit by 15 October 1996 proposals for assistance which UNOMIL or other United Nations agencies could contribute in support of the Liberian peace process, including, inter alia, disarmament, demobilization and verification of compliance by the factions. Accordingly, I dispatched a technical team to Liberia to assess, in consultation with UNOMIL, ECOMOG and the humanitarian community, the contribution which the United Nations could make in those fields. The team, which was led by my Deputy Military Adviser, Brigadier-General M. Bhagat, and included members of the departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Humanitarian Affairs, visited Liberia from 26 September to 3 October.

23. The team's visit to Liberia was preceded by discussions locally on disarmament and demobilization, especially in the light of the declared willingness of some factions to disarm some of their fighters before the date scheduled for the commencement of this exercise. The team also took into account the fact that the resources of UNOMIL, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had been extensively looted and that those organizations would need time to rebuild their assistance programmes for disarmament and demobilization.

24. In preparation for disarmament, ECOMOG has requested the factions to provide an indication of potential sites for the collection of arms. All the factions except LPC have so far done so and some 12 sites have tentatively been identified, though some of them may not be used for the disarmament and demobilization of fighters. Given the scarcity of resources and ECOMOG's current troop strength, UNOMIL, ECOMOG and the humanitarian community feel that disarmament and demobilization of fighters could take place at five or six centres.

25. On the basis of information received from the factions, there are approximately 60,000 fighters in Liberia. The factions will be responsible for delivering their fighters to the disarmament and demobilization centres. If they cooperate fully, it is estimated that the disarmament and demobilization process at five or six centres could be completed within a period of about three months.

26. ECOMOG has indicated that it would consider the possibility of establishing additional disarmament/demobilization centres, at the weapons collections sites, if additional manpower and logistic resources could be provided. In this connection, it will be recalled that during the meeting of ECOWAS Chiefs of Staff on 14 to 15 August, a number of ECOWAS member States indicated their interest in contributing troops to ECOMOG, subject to the availability of logistical support. While discussions continue between potential troop-contributing countries, ECOWAS and potential donors, no additional troops have yet been deployed to Liberia. The establishment of additional disarmament and demobilization centres would also depend on the capacity of the humanitarian community to organize and manage the necessary services there.

27. The military aspects of the mandate entrusted to UNOMIL by the Security Council under resolution 1020 (1995) of 10 November 1995 included the following tasks: to investigate all allegations of violations of the ceasefire reported to the Ceasefire Violations Committee; to recommend measures to prevent the recurrence of such violations and to report to the Secretary-General accordingly; to monitor compliance with the other military provisions of the peace agreements, including disengagement of forces, disarmament and observance of the arms embargo and to verify their impartial application; and to assist, as appropriate, in the maintenance of assembly sites agreed upon by ECOMOG, the LNTG and the factions, and in the implementation of a programme for the demobilization of combatants, in cooperation with the LNTG, donor agencies and NGOs.

28. In accordance with the above mandate and ECOMOG's revised concept of operations, it is estimated that UNOMIL would require: (a) one disarmament team of six military observers to be deployed at each disarmament/demobilization centre to monitor and verify the disarmament process; and (b) two mobile teams of six observers to continue monitoring and observing, in conjunction with ECOMOG, the implementation of the ceasefire, the disengagement of forces, the collection of weapons at areas other than the disarmament and demobilization sites, and compliance by the factions with the other military provisions of the Abuja Agreement, including the arms embargo. In addition, some 20 military observers would be required to man UNOMIL's military headquarters in Monrovia, which would include the Chief Military Observer and his immediate staff; an operations cell of five observers; an ECOMOG liaison cell of two observers; a logistic cell of two observers; and a medical unit of seven observers. The final composition of UNOMIL's military component would be dependent on ECOMOG's deployment, but would not exceed a total of 92 military observers. This would represent a reduction of some 68 military observers from the total strength of 160 authorized under resolution 1020 (1995).

29. After the completion of disarmament and demobilization, UNOMIL's military component would maintain a presence in Liberia to continue monitoring the implementation of the military provisions of the Abuja Agreement, thus helping to build the confidence necessary for the electoral period. UNOMIL's military component would start drawing down after the elections, which, in accordance with the revised timetable, are scheduled to take place by 30 May 1997.

30. As most of UNOMIL's vehicles, communications and other assets were looted during the April hostilities in Monrovia, the Mission will require additional

logistic support, especially vehicles and communications equipment, in order to carry out its tasks. UNOMIL will also require a second helicopter of medium lift capability to help it support the disarmament process.

IV. HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS

31. During the reporting period, fighters continued to violate human rights and harass innocent civilians. The most shocking and tragic example occurred on 28 September 1996 when at least 21 civilians were killed in Sinje, Grand Cape Mount County, during an attack on the village. The identity of those responsible has yet to be established but UNOMIL, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, ECOMOG and national human rights groups, is investigating the incident. It has so far been determined that the civilians suffered decapitation, castration and blunt object trauma, in addition to gunshot wounds.

32. Politically motivated incidents have been reported by Liberian human rights groups. They have attempted to investigate the incidents but the 6 April crisis resulted in severe depletion of their limited resources and this has impaired their investigative capacity.

33. It will be recalled that, under resolution 1020 (1995), UNOMIL was entrusted with the mandate "to investigate and report to the Secretary-General on violations of human rights and to assist local human rights groups, as appropriate, in raising voluntary contributions for training and logistic support". Because of the hostilities in Monrovia and the consequent downsizing of UNOMIL, it has not been possible to fill the three human rights posts which had been approved for the Mission. It is my intention to reactivate these posts to enable UNOMIL to fulfil this critical aspect of its mandate. The three Human Rights Officers will be responsible for investigating and reporting alleged violations of human rights in various areas of the country, depending on security conditions. They will coordinate with local human rights groups and assist them, as appropriate, in raising voluntary contributions for training and logistic support.

Situation of child soldiers

34. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which is mandated to address the issue of child soldiers in Liberia, has reported that all the factions have recruited and deployed children for direct combat and related military tasks, often under duress and sometimes through peer pressure or manipulation. It is estimated that 15,000 to 20,000 child soldiers are under the control of the six major warring factions. The children, who are under the age of 17, both male and female, are compelled to witness, and sometimes commit, human rights atrocities. They are also subject to sexual and drug abuse.

35. The 6 April hostilities in Monrovia disrupted UNICEF's programme for war-affected children. This programme, which is implemented through international and local NGOs, is now being progressively re-established to address the needs of war-affected youth in both urban and rural areas. It includes support for the establishment of community centres for vocational and literacy training and provides shelters, transit-homes and trauma counselling for children. UNICEF is

also planning to establish a number of schools in areas where there are children but no functioning educational facilities.

36. The demobilization of child fighters is a critical aspect of the peace process and national reconciliation. As a matter of priority, the Task Force on Demobilization and Reintegration, which is chaired by the office of the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator (HACO), has established a special technical committee, led by UNICEF, to address the issue of child soldiers in the context of the overall demobilization programme. The LNTG is in the process of formulating a general policy for war-affected children. Within this policy framework, UNICEF and its partners will implement special reintegration programmes for child soldiers. In this connection, it is envisaged that child soldiers will return to their home communities at the earliest opportunity after demobilization, where they will be assisted in readjusting to civilian life through the types of activities described in paragraph 35 above.

V. STATUS OF STOLEN PROPERTY

37. More than US$ 18 million worth of property (vehicles, generators, computers and other office and communications equipment) was looted from UNOMIL, United Nations agencies and NGOs during the 6 April crisis. Less than 1 per cent of the property has been recovered. In this connection, my Special Representative has met with leaders of each of the factions and demanded the return of all looted vehicles and properties in their possession. In addition, he has brought the matter to the attention of the ECOWAS Heads of State and has requested the assistance of Liberia's neighbours in retrieving United Nations property which may have crossed their borders. The Council of State has also been urged to use its good offices in encouraging the factions to return stolen property to the United Nations and NGOs.

38. Despite these efforts, only 32 vehicles, of a total of 489 looted during the crisis, have been recovered by UNOMIL and ECOMOG, and they are in very poor shape. The Government of Guinea has assisted in the recovery of a few looted items that had been exported from Liberia. The faction leaders have, on numerous occasions, promised to return the stolen property. However, their promises have not so far been fulfilled.

VI. HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS

39. The humanitarian situation during the reporting period has remained essentially unchanged, with a large number of persons in the interior cut off from relief assistance. There was an outbreak of cholera in Monrovia, which was effectively addressed by the international humanitarian community, including the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and HACO, in close collaboration with the national health authorities. In general, the humanitarian community continues to extend assistance to those in need in Monrovia and to areas in the interior as security conditions and resources permit.

40. The humanitarian community, led by HACO, has been successful in negotiating access to suffering populations in previously inaccessible areas. On

7 September 1996, a team led by HACO was able to reach Tubmanburg, which had been cut off for nearly seven months because of hostilities. Some areas of Grand Cape Mount County have also recently been opened up. The humanitarian situation in Tubmanburg is critical and about 82 per cent of the children in the area are severely malnourished. While the situation in Grand Cape Mount County is not as bad, many children, women and elderly persons have suffered from various degrees of malnutrition and related issues. The World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, WHO, the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) and HACO, together with international and national NGOs, are providing food, medical care, therapeutic supplementary feeding and other assistance to those in need in these areas. However, the recent deterioration in the security situation in Grand Cape Mount County has impeded the delivery of humanitarian assistance to that area.

Situation of refugees

41. In accordance with the new timetable for the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, the repatriation of refugees, which is one of the key aspects of the peace process, is scheduled to take place from 22 November 1996 to 31 January 1997. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is preparing to relaunch its plan of operations for the voluntary repatriation of the 750,000 Liberian refugees located mainly in Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. However, while relative calm has been restored in Monrovia and its environs, the rest of the country is not sufficiently secure, especially in major counties of potential return, to allow UNHCR to implement its plan for large-scale repatriation.

42. Some 120,000 refugees from Sierra Leone are currently residing in Liberia. Continued insecurity in many parts of the country has prevented UNHCR from reaching the majority of these refugees, who live in rural areas. The number who have taken refuge in Monrovia and its environs has almost doubled to some 30,000 in recent months, because of fighting in other areas. Plans to repatriate about 5,000 refugees who have indicated their wish to return to Sierra Leone are almost complete and it is expected that a further 20,000 refugees may return to Sierra Leone in the coming months.

Demobilization

43. Planning for demobilization and reintegration had reached an advanced stage prior to the outbreak of hostilities on 6 April 1996. As a result of the looting which ensued, all resources pre-positioned for demobilization and reintegration were lost and all relevant staff were repatriated. As the prospects of peace gradually improved, HACO reactivated the Demobilization and Reintegration Unit, which, under the overall authority of my Special Representative, is responsible for organizing and delivering services for the demobilization of combatants. The Unit is also responsible for assisting and coordinating programmes to facilitate the return of ex-combatants to productive life in civilian society. HACO has embarked on a sensitization campaign among all relevant parties, in particular the NGO community, to revive interest, support and planning for the process. In early September, these efforts resulted in the reactivation of the Task Force on Demobilization and Reintegration, a coordinating body which is chaired by HACO and comprises

UNOMIL, United Nations agencies, ECOMOG, the Liberian National Disarmament and Demobilization Commission (NDDC) and representatives of international and national NGOs. The Task Force has revised the previously adopted demobilization and reintegration plans to suit the new schedule of implementation of the Abuja Agreement and to accommodate the limitations imposed by the recent fighting. It has established two subcommittees to draw up revised plans for child soldiers and resettlement.

44. In accordance with the concept for disarmament outlined in section III above, the demobilization process will take place at disarmament/demobilization centres where, once combatants are disarmed, they will be registered and receive counselling. The programme will not depart significantly from the previous plan prepared following the 1995 Abuja Agreement and described in my report of 23 October 1995 (S/1995/881). However, the new demobilization programme does not envisage the provision of small assistance packages for ex-combatants, which were included in the previous plan. Resources thus saved will be used to augment short-term "bridging" activities which will help ensure that ex-combatants are engaged in productive activities after demobilization but before reintegration programmes become operational.

45. Ideally, ex-combatants would proceed directly from the disarmament/ demobilization centres to reintegration programmes, which would also cater to internally displaced persons and returnees. However, it is not expected that these programmes will be operational until at least three months after the start of the disarmament process, depending on the provision of voluntary contributions. It is essential that, during that period, ex-combatants, especially those with no means of livelihood, do not rearm or turn to banditry.

46. The activities which will help bridge the gap between demobilization and reintegration will include vocational training, education and work projects. Ex-combatants will be provided with food assistance for the duration of these bridging activities and will receive tools and equipment as deemed appropriate. For reasons of planning and security, bridging activities will take place in the vicinity of the disarmament/demobilization centres.

47. The emphasis in terms of incentives for disarmament and demobilization will be on these bridging projects and the provision of reintegration assistance. All members of the Task Force on Demobilization and Reintegration have agreed to this approach, which is deemed to be more effective than simply providing small, one-time packages of assistance.

48. The previous demobilization plan also envisaged the possibility of ex-combatants remaining at the demobilization centres for up to one week. Again, it is felt that resources would be more productively used if ex-combatants moved directly into bridging activities. Nevertheless, there may be a requirement for ex-combatants to remain at the centres for up to 24 hours. The Demobilization and Reintegration Unit of HACO will coordinate and manage the provision of food, health services, locally produced shelter, water and basic sanitation for the centres. The Unit will also be responsible for coordinating bridging activities with local authorities, United Nations agencies and international and local NGOs.

49. It will be recalled that, under General Assembly resolution 50/210 of 23 December 1995, the costs of the demobilization programme, including bridging activities, were included in the assessed budget of UNOMIL. These decisions were taken in recognition of the necessity of ensuring the sustainable demobilization of combatants if the peace process is to succeed. The present programme for demobilization, including bridging activities for a three-month period, will also therefore be included in UNOMIL's assessed budget. Should voluntary resources become available for the bridging activities, the assessed budget will be reimbursed accordingly.

VII. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

50. After almost seven years of civil war, the Liberian economy suffered a further setback as a result of the April hostilities. Informal trading activities fell by more than 50 per cent and the domestic production of food decreased to a mere fraction of previous output. About 90 per cent of registered businesses in the formal sector sustained losses and damage. The decrease in aggregate output resulted in a corresponding drop in income and a dramatic escalation of prices ranging from 100 to 500 per cent. While prices have gradually fallen, they still remain higher than in the pre-April period. Consequently, most Liberians are unable to meet their basic needs without humanitarian assistance.

51. Nevertheless, over the past few months, wholesale and retail trade in local food and other commodities and merchandise have slowly gained momentum. United Nations agencies and international organizations are gradually, albeit cautiously, resuming operations. The Government is attempting to encourage the revival of economic activity, but the recovery process has only tentatively begun and is expected to prove exceedingly difficult.

52. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is providing basic equipment and supplies to key government agencies to assist them in resuming their rehabilitation, reconstruction and economic recovery planning activities. UNDP is also providing support for transitional needs in the health, water, sanitation and shelter sectors.

53. The United Nations agencies and NGOs are preparing projects for newly accessible areas, such as Tubmanburg, particularly to rehabilitate health facilities and other basic services. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has launched a programme of rehabilitation of the agricultural sector, with emphasis on the supply of agricultural inputs to vulnerable families and assistance to fisheries.

VIII. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

54. The revised budget for the maintenance of UNOMIL at its present reduced level for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997, which is currently before the General Assembly for its consideration, amounts to $14,512,800 gross and is equivalent to a monthly rate of $1,209,400 gross.

55. Should the Security Council decide to expand the operations of UNOMIL, as recommended in paragraph 59 below, the additional requirements for the maintenance and operation of the Mission will be sought from the General Assembly at its current session.

56. As of 8 October 1996, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNOMIL special account since the inception of the Mission amounted to $10.5 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations on 8 October 1996 was $1,804 million.

57. Since my last report, the Government of France has made a contribution of $679,611 to the Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Cotonou Agreement on Liberia. As at 8 October 1996, total contributions received amounted to some $24.7 million, with authorized expenditures totalling some $22.7 million.

IX. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

58. In August 1996, the faction leaders once again committed themselves to lay down their arms and to cooperate fully with ECOWAS and the international community in implementing the new timetable for the Abuja Agreement. They continue to reiterate through their offices in Monrovia their readiness to disarm and demobilize their fighters but, once again, they are engaged in hostilities in other parts of the country. Some of these hostilities may involve only minor skirmishes but civilians still suffer atrocities of the kind perpetrated at Sinje. And the allegations that NPFL has taken control of Greenville from LPC may have more serious military and political ramifications. The factions also continue to impede efforts to provide assistance to suffering people and to abuse international personnel. Unless the faction leaders finally decide to match their words with clear and verifiable deeds, the international community is unlikely to continue to extend its support to the peace process in Liberia.

59. I am nevertheless hopeful that the assessment meeting of ECOWAS, UNOMIL, ECOMOG, the LNTG and representatives of the donor community, which began on 16 October, will address these problems and enable the peace process to move forward. Accordingly, in pursuance of Security Council resolution 1071 (1996), I have set out in the present report recommendations on the type of assistance UNOMIL could provide, particularly in the fields of disarmament, demobilization and human rights. The related cost estimates for a six-month period will be issued shortly as an addendum to this report. I wish to assure the Security Council, however, that the deployment of the personnel and logistic resources linked to these proposals will not be undertaken unless the factions take the concrete steps required to implement the revised timetable of the Abuja Agreement and put their country firmly on the path of genuine peace and national reconciliation.

60. I have not been able to make recommendations, as requested by the Security Council, on the type of assistance which the international community could contribute towards the holding of free and fair elections in Liberia. As noted above, ECOWAS and the Council of State are continuing consultations on the nature of the role that the international community should be asked to play in

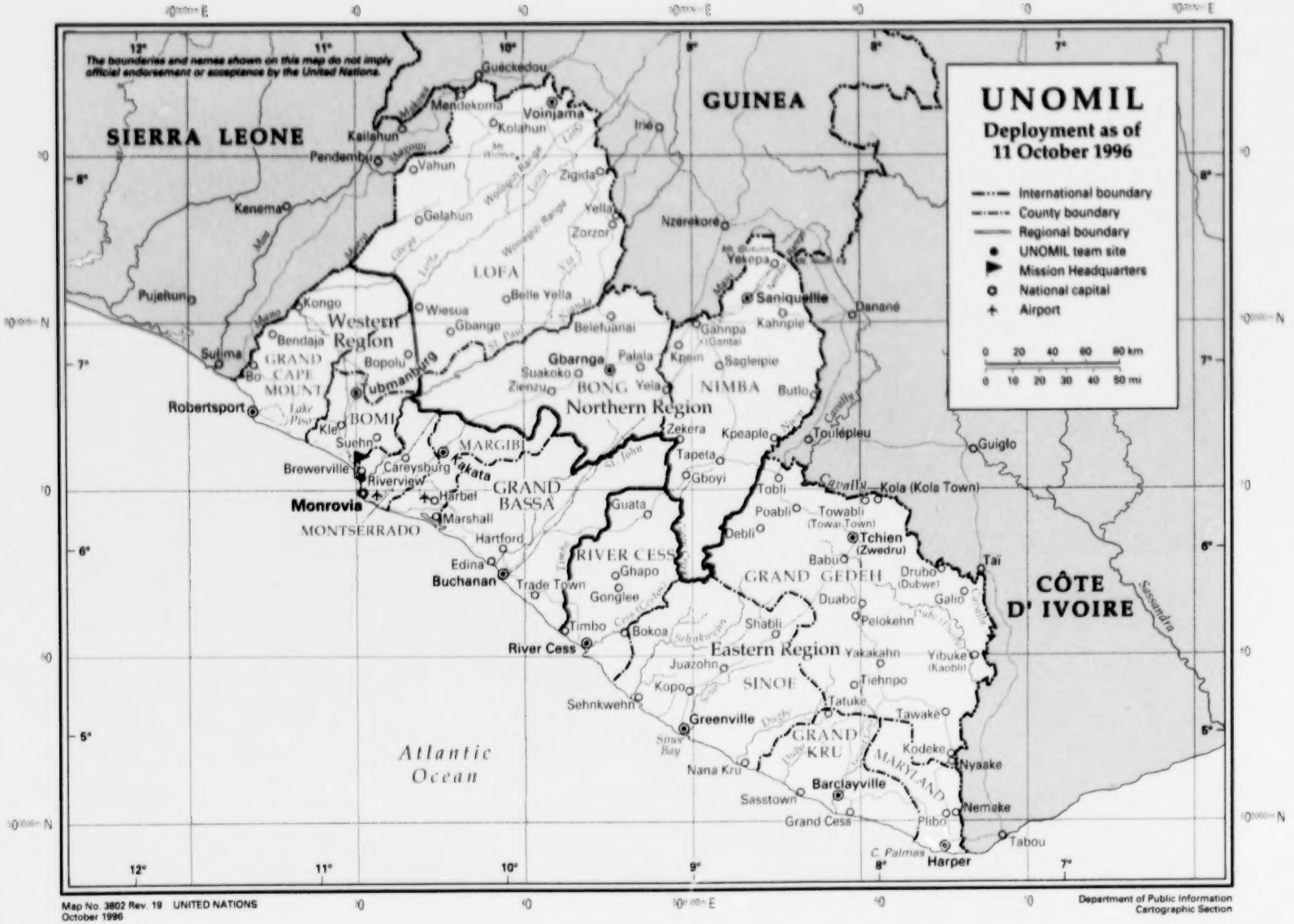
the electoral process. Given that the elections are scheduled for May 1997, there is little time to make the necessary preparations and it is essential that the Council of State be encouraged by ECOWAS to take a very early decision on the matter. I will keep the Security Council informed of developments and, in the event that a request for United Nations assistance is received, I will report to the Council with recommendations on the type of assistance which the United Nations could provide.

61. While the attitude of the faction leaders remains a matter of concern, the new Chairperson of the Council of State, Ms. Ruth Perry, and many Liberian civilian groups are trying energetically to restore peace in their country. I congratulate Ms. Perry on her efforts and call on the international community to give her and the Liberian civilian groups all the support they need to soften the intransigence of the faction leaders and restore a peaceful society in Liberia.

Annex

Composition of the military component of UNOMIL as at 11 October 1996

	Currently in position	Additional 24 observers
Bangladesh	1	2
China	-	2
Czech Republic	-	2
Egypt	1	3
India	3	3
Kenya	2	3
Malaysia	1	2
Nepal	-	2
Pakistan	2	3
Uruguay	—	2
Total	10	24


The bounderies and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
UNOMIL
Deployment as of 11 October 1996
International boundary
County boundary
Regional boundary
UNOMIL team site
Mission Headquarters
National capital
Airport
0 20 40 60 80 km
0 10 20 30 40 50 mi
SIERRA LEONE
GUINEA
CÔTE D' IVOIRE
Atlantic Ocean
Western Region
Northern Region
Eastern Region
LOFA
NIMBA
BONG
GRAND CAPE MOUNT
BOMI
MARGIBI
GRAND BASSA
MONTSERRADO
RIVER CESS
GRAND GEDEH
SINOE
GRAND KRU
MARYLAND
Monrovia
Robertsport
Buchanan
River Cess
Greenville
Harper
Barclayville
Zwedru
Kola (Kola Town)
Saniquellie
Ganta
Voinjama
Gbarnga
Zigida
Nzerekore
Yekepa
Danane
Guigio
Tai
Sassandra
Pujehun
Kenema
Kailahun
Pendembu
Vahun
Gelahun
Kolahun
Mendekoma
Gueckedou
Lofa
Mano
Moa
St. Paul
St. John
Cavally
Sinoe Bay
C. Palmas
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October 1996
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Cartographic Section